

SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY ENDORSES THE SAFETY OF LOW- AND NO- CALORIE SWEETENERS

Experts agree there are no health risks from aspartame, stevia and other low- and no- calorie sweeteners at a conference hosted by the Italian Ministry of Health

Rome, 11 January, 2011 – Italian and European food safety, health and nutrition experts gathered today for a conference on “No-Calorie Intense Sweeteners – Focus on Safety of Use”, at the head offices of the Italian Ministry of Health. All experts attending reached the conclusion that all low- and no- calorie sweeteners currently available on the market are safe for consumption, in line with and supports the position adopted by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)¹ in early 2011, which has stated that low- and no-calorie sweeteners approved for use in foods and drinks in the European Union are perfectly safe².

Speaking at the conference, **Andrea Poli, Scientific Director of Nutrition Foundation of Italy (NFI)**, said: *“Recent years have seen the dissemination of contradictory information, which is generally contrary to the prevailing opinion of the scientific community, about the alleged health risks arising from the consumption of some low- and no-calorie sweeteners such as aspartame. At today’s conference, which has gone through the latest positions by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), top-tier experts said that there is no longer room for doubt about the safety of these substances, which have been thoroughly evaluated and approved by the appropriate regulatory authorities.”*

The conference was addressed by a panel of authoritative scientific experts including:

Giuseppe Fatati, President of Fondazione ADI, the Italian Association of Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition

John Christian Larsen, Chief consultant in Toxicology and Risk Assessment of the National Food Institute, Technical University of Denmark

Carlo La Vecchia, Epidemiologist at Mario Negri Institute for Pharmacological Research and at University of Milan

Marina Marinovich, President of the Italian Society of Toxicology

Andrea Poli, Scientific Director of Nutrition Foundation of Italy (NFI).

Giuseppe Fatati, President of Fondazione ADI - Italian Association of Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition, underlined that: *“Today’s conference is important to amplify a message already deep-seated in the scientific community at international level: the safety of low- and no-calorie sweeteners. Our final objective is to reassure on the consumption of low-calorie food products containing them, if consumed as part of a generally varied and balanced diet, they can help people manage their calorie intake – which is so important as we face the spreading of more sedentary lifestyles.”*

¹ Statement of EFSA on the scientific evaluation of two studies related to the safety of artificial sweeteners - EFSA Journal 2011;9(2):2089 [16 pp.]. <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/efsajournal/pub/2089.htm>

² In May 2011, EFSA accepted a request from the European Commission to bring forward (from 2020) the re-evaluation of the sweetener aspartame to 2012.

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Carlo La Vecchia, Epidemiologist at Mario Negri Institute for Pharmacological Research and at University of Milan, added: *“None of the epidemiological studies conducted – by us as well as by the US National Cancer Institute - found that low- and no-calorie sweeteners, with particular regard to the two sweeteners mostly debated, saccharine and aspartame, pose any risk to human health. None of the alarms issued over the past forty years has ever been borne out by the results.”*

John Christian Larsen, Chief consultant in Toxicology and Risk Assessment of the National Food Institute, Technical University of Denmark noted: *“The authorities which examine and evaluate the safety of low- and no-calorie sweeteners follow rigorous methods, widely accepted worldwide. Moments of debate and communication like today’s conference are important, as they aim to clarify many “false alarms” on low- and no-calorie sweeteners’ safety launched in the past.”*

Also speaking at the conference **Marina Marinovich, President of the Italian Society of Toxicology**, concluded: *“All food additives are subjected to broad-ranging and in-depth testing before they obtain approval, and low- and no-calorie sweeteners are no exception. The studies questioning the safety of these substances have generally been based on parameters that do not comply with commonly accepted methods, and must therefore be deemed inadmissible from a scientific perspective.”*

ENDS

NFI – Nutrition Foundation of Italy

NFI - Nutrition Foundation of Italy was created in December 1976 with the goal of enabling interaction and collaboration with government bodies, universities and industry to contribute to the development of scientific research, to the exchange of information in the field of nutrition and to the promotion of interdisciplinary researches in this area. NFI has a Scientific Committee of Experts with recognized competence in the different disciplines related to food and beverage. Finally the Directorate, supported by the Secretariat, ensures an accurate management, expansion and execution of all activities.

Fondazione ADI - Associazione Italiana di Dietetica e Nutrizione Clinica (ADI Foundation - Italian Association of Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition)

The mission of Fondazione ADI is the enhancement of dietetics and clinical nutrition, and the improvement of the professionals interested in this field. This goal is achieved through constant upgrading, technical-scientific and cultural progress, identification of specializations within the profession, training, promotion and implementation of initiatives aimed at studying and investigating - at scientific and technical level - those subjects which are currently, or may be in the future, at the hearth of the profession of those who operate in the dietetics and clinical nutrition field - in addition to complementary related subjects.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

- Paolo Aureli (Advisor of FOSAN, Foundation for the Study of Food and Nutrition)
- Ovidio Brignoli (Vice-President of Società Italiana di Medicina Generale - SIMG, the Italian Society of General Practitioners)
- Giovanna Cecchetto (President of ANDID, National Association of Dieticians)
- Amleto D'Amicis (Vice-President of SINU, Italian Society of Human Nutrition)
- Eugenio Del Toma (Honorary President of ADI-Italian Association of Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition)
- Andrea Ghiselli (Director of research, INRAN, National Research Institute for Food and Nutrition)
- Agostino Macrì (Campus Biomedico, Rome)
- Giuseppe Marelli (National Advisor of AMD, Association of Diabetologists, Member of the Group on Diabetes and Nutrition studies)
- Walter Marrocco (Director of National School of Lifestyle Medicine – FIMMG, Italian Federation of General Medicine Practitioners)
- Giuseppe Rovera (President of ANSISA, National Association of Food Science Experts)
- Paolo Sbraccia (Professor of Dietology, University of Roma Tor Vergata, Responsible of Obesity Centre, Tor Vergata General Hospital; SIO –Italian Society of Obesity)
- Vittorio Silano (President of Scientific Committee of EFSA)
- Roberto Stella (President of SNAMID, General Society for the Professional Development of General Medicine Practitioners)
- Marcello Ticca (Vice-president of SISA, Italian Society of Nutrition Sciences)

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